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ABSTRACT

Since bilingual education became an official government mandate, there has been much controversy regarding its philosophy, objectives, procedures, and effectiveness. Some educators choose to view bilingual education as transitory, and other educators believe minority students should be given bilingual instruction throughout their public school years. Still other educators argue against bilingual education and feel it should be abolished. A review of research reveals different attitudes and ideas concerning bilingual education. Studies regarding teacher attitudes are in most cases inconclusive and contradictory. Veronica Gutierrez found that teacher attitudes play an important role in students' acceptance/rejection of their mother tongue and heritage. Martin Ilivicky reported that some students and teachers felt progress in English had been definitely slowed because of the bilingual classes. Lester Golub and Joseph Prewitt-Diaz found significant differences in the perception of parents and students regarding the impact of a bilingual education program, but no significant difference was found between Hispanic and non-Hispanic teachers. Merle Marks and Patricia Cabrera found that those teachers who volunteered to participate in a bilingual program were biased in favor of the Spanish speakers. It is evident from these and other studies that a need exists for more evaluative studies concerning teacher attitudes toward bilingual education. (NQA)

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WHAT RESEARCH SAYS ABOUT THE ATTITUDES TOWARD AND THE OPINIONS OF BILINGUAL EDUCATION

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Since Bilingual Education became an official government mandate, there has been much controversy regarding its philosophy, objectives, procedures, and effectiveness. There are educators who choose to view bilingual education as transitory (transitional approach), and those who believe minority students should be given bilingual instruction throughout their public school years (maintenance approach).

Pulte (1979) believes the maintenance model of bilingual-bicultural education and a culturally pluralistic curriculum will promote optimal learning and the basic skills needed for coping in this large society. He says that people who fear bilingual education only teaches minority culture may feel that there are only two kinds of knowledge: "ours and theirs" (p. 57).

Simoes (1975) states that the idea of the "melting pot" has failed and that cultural pluralism is a fact of life in the U.S. He believes the "American way" idea has created a negative social environment which has produced racial and ethnic conflicts in world history, destroying self-identity and respect for other people from different parts of the world. He implies that public school educators should be more accountable in the areas of bilingual-bicultural education in response to individual differences in this multicultural society.

Swanson (1979) perceives bilingual education important in helping students become productive Americans. He feels it is meaningful to the students

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because they are not kept back in grade level nor trapped in communication difficulties, nor made to feel ashamed of their language, their family and their culture.

Poster (1979) advocates bilingual-bicultural programs to help students understand their own culture and the American culture. He states that some teachers believe American history should not be translated because it loses something in translation, but he believes teachers should teach American history from diverse ethnic perspectives, rather than solely from the Anglo point of view.

Schon (1980) supports the hypotheses that in order to improve proficiency and achievement in a second language, a child's first language skills must be sufficiently developed first. She believes bilingual education is very important in assisting minority-language students to develop their potential and to identify with their own culture and other cultures in America.

According to Edwards (1980) much of the writing in favor of bilingual education is based upon the belief that the "melting pot" is an evil that must be eliminated. He quotes writers such as Blanco (1979) who claim that Americans recognize cultural diversity, but still want the schools to be the basis of the "melting pot."

Iiams (1977) suggests that bilingual education should be more than a way of accommodating culturally different students who are performing below the normal academic level, but to help them become proficient in the national language to improve their chances of moving ahead in mainstream America.

Katcher (1980), who argues against bilingual education, describes it as "a crutch which only serves to lengthen dependency of students on their native tongue" (p. 8). She advocates total immersion in English favoring the "old" approach to learning English.

Quigg (1979) also views bilingual education as a crutch that reduces the incentive of learning English. He says bilingual education aids Latinos in trying to live and work without knowledge of English. He doesn't believe in helping Latinos learn English, and agrees with Katcher (1980) in the old swim or sink approach.

Katcher (1980) stated that parents are the key to English proficiency in their children. She suggests that parents should demand schools to provide an intensified English program for their children. She feels English should be regarded as a first and not as a second language to reduce the number of non-English speaking students.

Bethell (1979) reported that bilingual education has been moving from transitional to maintenance and implied the melting pot idea is dead, and minority demands have been met (i.e. Spanish public signs). He criticized how bilingual programs got away from the desegregation issue by putting Anglos with children of different ethnic backgrounds. He suggested that bilingual education should be abolished.

Krug (1979) argues that unless the two different approaches of bilingual education (maintenance vs. transitional) are evaluated and supporters of each approach provide clear evidence as to their effectiveness, bilingual education will remain a controversial topic.

Gutierrez (1981) stated that attitudes of public school teachers play an important role in students' acceptance or rejection of their mother tongue and heritage. She held that teacher attitudes can often result in low academic achievement for bilingual students.

Ilivicky (1976) field tested a transitional bilingual program in New York City and reported that some students and teachers felt that progress in English had been definitely slowed because of the bilingual classes, and

that the necessity to learn English in order to function in the average high school classroom had been temporarily delayed and/or removed entirely in many instances.

McRae (1972) conducted a study to measure teacher attitudes and activities relative to "Carrascolendas," a bilingual instructional television program. It was found that attitudes were more positive among teachers who possessed a high degree of bilingualism in Spanish and English.

Campbell, Taylor and Tucker (1973) examined the opinions of English-speaking and French-speaking teachers regarding traditional programs in English language instruction in which French is a second language in a French immersion program. Results indicated that both groups of teachers shared views concerning the inadequacy of the traditional English language program. They agreed that it provides students with a solid base in their native language, skill in content subjects, and sensitivity to their values and traditions, but it did not produce children who are skilled in French or sensitive to the values and traditions of French Canadians. The French Immersion program was generally viewed favorably by French teachers, but not by English teachers.

Prewitt-Diaz and Golug (1981) conducted a study in the community of Bethlehem, Pennsylvania to determine if there was a difference between the perceptions of the impact of a bilingual education program on Hispanic and non-Hispanic parents, teachers and students. The majority of Hispanics in this study were Puerto Rican and the non-Hispanics were native English speakers of European descent who worked and lived within the school district. Results indicated significant differences in perception of the impact of a bilingual education program between parents and between students, but no significant difference was found between Hispanic and non-Hispanic teachers.

Quintana and Ramirez (1976-77) interviewed thirty elementary school

teachers and three principals to ascertain the extent to which Anglo American educators perceived bilingual-bicultural education as a form of compensatory education. Results indicated that 40% of the educators perceived bilingual-bicultural education as a vehicle for assimilation, while 57% perceived it more in terms of leading to self-pride and cultural awareness.

Marks and Cabrera (1977) conducted a study to determine teacher attitudes toward English and Spanish speakers. Thirty-one teachers, who volunteered to participate in a bilingual program, were included in the study. Fourteen teachers were selected to participate in the bilingual program, and were provided with training and bilingual teaching experience. The other group of seventeen teachers who volunteered, taught in their usual situations and did not receive specific bilingual instruction. Three months later, both groups of teachers listened to audio tapes of male bilingual speakers. Each speaker read a short passage of about two minutes in length. The teachers were unaware that the four English and four Spanish speakers were actually the same four people. The passage was read in English and in Spanish later in the series by the same person. Results showed higher ratings for the Spanish presentation than for the English presentation. In other words, the Spanish speaker was considered to have more desirable personal attributes than the English speaker. The findings were unexpected. It was expected that Anglo teachers would reveal negative attitudes toward Spanish speakers, but those teachers who volunteered to participate in a bilingual program were biased in favor of the Spanish speakers.

MacIntosh and Ornstein (1974) conducted a limited study regarding teachers attitudes toward Spanish and English in El Paso, Texas. A questionnaire was administered to a group of teachers attending a conference. More than half of the teachers were bilingual. Attitudes of teachers toward the

needed bilingualism were found to be contradictory.

Kanowith (1980) conducted a study to reveal teachers' and administrators' attitudes toward bilingual education. A questionnaire was administered to staff members both in and outside the bilingual program at Roberto Clemente school in New Jersey. Results indicated that regardless of the individual teaching position at the school, teachers' attitudes and perceptions toward bilingual education were at varience and often contradictory.

The review of research reveals different attitudes and ideas concerning bilingual education. Studies regarding teacher attitudes were in most cases inconclusive and contradictory. It appears evident that there is a need for more evaluative studies concerning teacher attitudes toward bilingual education.

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